

appendix 1

BACK TO THE FUTURE—PAST EFFORTS AT VIEWING THE FUTURE

The Department of Labor has regularly attempted to anticipate trends in the workforce and workplace to assist it in planning ways to better serve America's working people. Below is a sampling of these efforts.

Occupational outlook studies

In 1940, Congress authorized creation of the Occupational Outlook Service in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Initially concerned with providing job projections for use in employment counseling, the Service soon began developing projections of workforce supply and labor needs for defense industries. After World War II, the program provided projections for use in counseling veterans. It also studied occupational realignments during the war to aid in planning the demobilization.

Planning for the post-World War II economy

In 1941, even before Pearl Harbor, Congress asked the Department to begin studying labor-related problems likely to arise after the war, particularly the issue of jobs and unemployment. In response, the Bureau of Labor Statistics established a Labor Problems Division that conducted statistical and economic research on employment problems which were expected to arise during demobilization. The data the Division developed were used in demobilization and postwar planning. Generally speaking, policymakers expected that unemployment after demobilization would be the most serious economic problem. As it turned out, returning servicemen and -women were quickly absorbed into a booming postwar economy, and price inflation was the major economic problem.

Labor supply issues and technological change

During Secretary of Labor James Mitchell's term (1953–1961), it became increasingly clear that the problem of assuring an adequate supply of trained workers would be a major responsibility of the Department. To prepare policies for the development and full use of the country's workforce, Secretary Mitchell set up a special task force to administer a Skills of the Work Force Program. One of the task force's main jobs was to determine future workforce needs in a number of important occupations. One result of this effort was the publication of a series of longterm studies of the types of labor that would be needed in the 1960s and beyond. These studies revealed an expected growth in employment opportunities that would produce some 87 million jobs by 1970 (which turned out to be an overestimate), but they pointed to the danger of a continuing lag in the number of skilled workers. The study concluded that the participation of America's black, older, and women workers, as well as workers with disabilities, would be required. Out of concern for expected labor shortages, due in part to employment discrimination against these groups, the Department began to lay plans for action programs to improve their opportunities. The project also provided data on the impacts and trends of automation that were used by other departments and by the Congress.

Building on efforts that began in the Eisenhower administration, in 1961 Secretary Arthur Goldberg created an Office of Automation and Manpower to deal with employment problems created by automation and other technological developments and to coordinate departmental research in this area. New studies found that the greatest percentage of job growth was expected in professional and technical occupations. Demand was also to increase for clerical

and sales personnel, skilled workers, managers, and those in service occupations.

In the early 1960s, the Department's Manpower Administration attempted to develop more accurate methods of anticipating the effects of technological change on employment in specific industries. In 1965, it launched a project focused on employment trends from 1965 to 1975 in three industries thought to be especially affected by technological change: industrial and engineering design and drafting (significant negative effects found likely, but far in the future); the telephone industry (moderate employment growth foreseen despite significant technological changes); and the health service industry (rapid increase in employment, jobs to be modified by new technology).

Manpower Report to the President

The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 required the Department of Labor to prepare an annual *Manpower Report to the President*. One of the purposes of these Reports was to delineate future trends to help in developing future program and policy directions.

There was an extensive section of the first *Manpower Report* (1963), titled "The Manpower Future" and another section on "Looking Ahead;" both focused on future government efforts needed in this area. The report stated that, based on recommendations of the President's Committee to Appraise Employment and Unemployment Statistics in 1962, there must be deeper analysis of labor force data. In view of the many years of lead time required in planning and implementing expansions in training programs, the report was to look as far ahead as possible at future manpower needs and resources.

The first report correctly predicted that during the 1960s, the expansion of the women's labor force, especially of young women, would accelerate. It did not, however, anticipate the dramatic growth in the number of women job seekers that occurred. Its prediction was that by 1970 there would be 29.4 million women workers, an increase of 25 percent over the 1960 level. In fact by 1970 there were 31.6 million, an increase of 36 percent. The prediction was even further off for women labor force participants aged 25 through 45. The 1963 Report anticipated a 1970 level of 10.2 million, an increase of 8 percent since 1960. Actual growth was to 11.7 million, a much sharper increase of 24 percent over the decade. The report also slightly overestimated the growth in participation by men. The result was that a massive trend toward greater participation by women relative to men was missed.

Seminars on manpower policy

Beginning in 1964 and continuing into 1968, the Manpower Administration sponsored a series of seminars by leading experts on many aspects of work, society, and the economy. Several of the seminars dealt with predicting the future. At a 1967 seminar on professional manpower trends, speaker Dael Wolfle discussed problems in projecting into the future. He noted that "we can be fairly confident that some unexpected things will happen, so we hedge our projections by assuming that certain conditions or related trends will continue, and we give ourselves an escape route by warning that all bets are off if our assumptions turn out to be inaccurate. How well have we done? I think not very well." He cited a 1954 commission on training that projected 12,000 doctoral degrees would be awarded in 1970. Yet almost 30,000 doctorates were actually granted in 1970.

In 1965 industrial engineer Dr. E.R.F.W. Crossman gave a seminar on automation, skill, and manpower predictions. He hypothesized that automation of industry would come in two phases. First, direct production work would be largely eliminated, leaving a fairly constant staff whose size would not be directly dependent on demand for products. The marginal labor requirement would approach zero. This would have important implications for the business cycle. A second, longer-run phase of automation would significantly reduce that fairly constant labor force.

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy

In July 1963, Secretary Willard Wirtz established the predecessor of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy. Created at the instigation of and then headed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, its function was to enable the Secretary to understand and anticipate changes affecting workers. Early on, the Office worked on a five-year plan to achieve a fully trained and employed workforce.

In 1970, the Office helped prepare the pamphlet *U.S. Manpower in the 1970s: Opportunity and Challenge*. It dealt with the next ten years' economic and labor force growth, demographics of a younger labor force, African Americans' share of the economy, and increasing numbers of working women and what that meant.

Women's Bureau future-oriented effort in Carter administration

During the Carter administration, the Women's Bureau devoted itself wholeheartedly to anticipating future needs of the rapidly growing number of women in the workforce. Termed by labor econo-

mists the most important labor phenomenon of the twentieth century, this trend was expected, from the perspective of the late 1970s, to continue well into the future. The overriding concern of the Bureau in this period was how to accommodate the increasing numbers of women in the workplace, how they would be distributed in the various occupations, and what services should be provided that would improve their opportunities and working conditions.

In 1978, the Women's Bureau Director began reporting directly to the Secretary of Labor instead of to an Assistant Secretary. This change enhanced the Bureau's ability to deal with future trends and issues. Recognizing the unmet and steadily growing needs of women for support such as employment training, child care and flexible work arrangements, old age income security, and freedom from hazards and harassment on the job, the Bureau developed a three-pronged approach on these issues of the future. The strategy included policy development, outreach, and information dissemination.

Through its policy development efforts, the Bureau most effectively expressed and pursued its concerns about the future of women in the workplace. Policy staff identified and studied issues and emerging trends through statistical and legislative analysis, research, and interaction with experts in the various fields under study. They then developed policy recommendations for the Secretary of Labor and other federal officials. For example, acting on projected trend lines for women in the workplace, the Bureau successfully sought inclusion of measures in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act amendments that improved the provision of employment services to women. The Bureau also applied policy development efforts in such areas as equal employment opportunity for women in the

construction industry, preventing sex discrimination and harassment in the workplace generally, issues of women business owners, and job safety and health for women.

The Bureau anticipated that, as women's labor force participation rates rocketed to a projected 65 percent by 1990 (an overestimate of about 7 percentage points), it would have a larger role in dealing with the rapidly changing and growing needs of women workers. Among efforts that would need attention from the Bureau were: changing outdated perceptions about the role of women in the economy; greater assistance to women below the poverty line; improving job opportunities for women in nontraditional occupations and high-technology jobs; and providing more services and flexibility to meet family needs.

Bureau of Labor-Management Relations and Cooperative Programs

In response to the Reagan administration's interest in improving industrial productivity and in making labor relations less adversarial, in May 1984 the Department established the Bureau of Labor-Management Relations and Cooperative Programs (BLMRCP) as the focal point of federal efforts to encourage the growth of quality-of-work life programs. It gathered and analyzed information on labor-management issues and trends and carried out an extensive research program.

Based on recommendations by three Presidential panels which studied ways to improve competitiveness in the 1980s and afterward, BLMRCP developed a number of future-oriented conferences and publications to help labor and management professionals improve the labor-relations climate.

Workforce 2000

Secretary William Brock (1985–1987) commissioned a study by the Hudson Institute titled *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers in the Twenty-first Century* (1987). The study identified major economic trends, such as healthy economic growth, a reduced manufacturing sector, higher skill demands in the service sector, and slow workforce growth. Based on these projections, the Institute suggested a set of goals, including: improving the education of all workers, accelerating productivity, insuring continuing training and education of the aging workforce, dealing with needs of families and working women, and better integrating minorities into the economy.

Decades later—similar concerns

While many of these initiatives were considered decades ago, their concerns are echoed today. The forces of globalization, and more particularly technology, are driving employers' and workers' decisions in ways not contemplated as recently as the late 1980s and early 1990s. But these forces have not changed workers' basic goals.

Three themes still shape our goals for the future:

- How do we ensure that workers have the skills that provide lifelong economic security?
- How do we accommodate workers' needs to balance their jobs with caring for their families?
- How do we ensure that all workers have opportunities in America's workforce and that our diverse population works in safe and fair workplaces?

In the haste to address challenges as fast as they present themselves, policy and decisionmakers will do well to remember that workers' needs have long remained constant.